

HOUSE BILL 158

Unofficial Copy  
C5  
HB 268/02 - ENV

2003 Regular Session  
3r0929

---

By: **Delegates Owings and Branch**  
Introduced and read first time: January 27, 2003  
Assigned to: Economic Matters

---

A BILL ENTITLED

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Public Utilities - Natural Gas Universal Service Program Task Force**

3 FOR the purpose of establishing a Natural Gas Universal Service Program Task  
4 Force to study the energy needs of low-income gas and electric customers,  
5 including the possible establishment of a natural gas universal service program;  
6 providing for the membership, charge, and responsibilities of the Task Force;  
7 requiring the Public Service Commission to provide staff support for the Task  
8 Force; requiring the Task Force to report to certain persons by a certain date;  
9 providing for the termination of this Act; and generally relating to energy needs  
10 of low-income customers and natural gas universal service.

11 BY adding to  
12 Article - Public Utility Companies  
13 Section 7-608  
14 Annotated Code of Maryland  
15 (1998 Volume and 2002 Supplement)

16 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF  
17 MARYLAND, That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

18 **Article - Public Utility Companies**

19 7-608.

20 (A) THERE IS A NATURAL GAS UNIVERSAL SERVICE PROGRAM TASK FORCE.

21 (B) (1) THE TASK FORCE CONSISTS OF THE FOLLOWING MEMBERS:

22 (I) ONE MEMBER OF THE HOUSE OF DELEGATES APPOINTED BY  
23 THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE;

24 (II) ONE MEMBER OF THE SENATE OF MARYLAND APPOINTED BY  
25 THE PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE;

26 (III) THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMISSION OR A DESIGNEE OF THE  
27 CHAIRMAN;

1 (IV) THE PEOPLE'S COUNSEL OR A DESIGNEE OF THE PEOPLE'S  
2 COUNSEL;

3 (V) THE SECRETARY OF HUMAN RESOURCES OR A DESIGNEE OF  
4 THE SECRETARY;

5 (VI) THE DIRECTOR OF THE MARYLAND ENERGY ADMINISTRATION  
6 OR A DESIGNEE OF THE DIRECTOR;

7 (VII) TWO MEMBERS REPRESENTING NATURAL GAS COMPANIES  
8 OPERATING IN THE STATE, APPOINTED BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMISSION;

9 (VIII) ONE MEMBER REPRESENTING INDUSTRIAL AND COMMERCIAL  
10 GAS CUSTOMERS IN THE STATE, APPOINTED BY THE MARYLAND CHAMBER OF  
11 COMMERCE;

12 (IX) ONE MEMBER REPRESENTING RESIDENTIAL GAS CUSTOMERS  
13 IN THE STATE, APPOINTED BY THE PEOPLE'S COUNSEL;

14 (X) ONE MEMBER REPRESENTING LOW-INCOME RESIDENTIAL GAS  
15 CUSTOMERS IN THE STATE, APPOINTED BY THE SECRETARY OF HUMAN RESOURCES;

16 (XI) ONE MEMBER REPRESENTING MUNICIPAL CORPORATIONS IN  
17 THE STATE, APPOINTED BY THE MARYLAND MUNICIPAL LEAGUE;

18 (XII) ONE MEMBER REPRESENTING COUNTIES IN THE STATE,  
19 APPOINTED BY THE MARYLAND ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES; AND

20 (XIII) TWO MEMBERS REPRESENTING CHARITABLE ORGANIZATIONS  
21 THAT PROVIDE ASSISTANCE TO LOW-INCOME FAMILIES IN THE STATE, APPOINTED  
22 BY THE PEOPLE'S COUNSEL.

23 (2) IN CONSULTATION WITH THE OTHER APPOINTING ENTITIES, THE  
24 CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMISSION SHALL COORDINATE THE APPOINTMENT PROCESS  
25 FOR THE TASK FORCE IN AN EFFORT TO ACHIEVE DIVERSITY OF GEOGRAPHICAL  
26 REPRESENTATION OF THE STATE ON THE TASK FORCE.

27 (3) THE TASK FORCE SHALL SELECT A CHAIRMAN FROM AMONG ITS  
28 MEMBERS.

29 (4) A MEMBER OF THE TASK FORCE:

30 (I) MAY NOT RECEIVE COMPENSATION AS A MEMBER OF THE TASK  
31 FORCE; BUT

32 (II) IS ENTITLED TO REIMBURSEMENT FOR EXPENSES UNDER THE  
33 STANDARD STATE TRAVEL REGULATIONS, AS PROVIDED IN THE STATE BUDGET.

34 (C) THE TASK FORCE SHALL:

1 (1) IDENTIFY POPULATIONS OF LOW-INCOME GAS CUSTOMERS IN NEED  
2 OF ASSISTANCE IN MEETING THEIR HEATING NEEDS;

3 (2) IDENTIFY FORMS OF ASSISTANCE THAT MAY BE APPROPRIATE FOR  
4 LOW-INCOME GAS CUSTOMERS, INCLUDING FINANCIAL SUPPORT AND ENERGY  
5 CONSERVATION MEASURES;

6 (3) ANALYZE FEDERAL, STATE, LOCAL, AND PRIVATE CHARITABLE  
7 ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS IN THIS STATE AND OTHER STATES THAT PROVIDE  
8 ASSISTANCE TO LOW-INCOME GAS CUSTOMERS AND ELECTRIC CUSTOMERS;

9 (4) IDENTIFY SOURCES OF FUNDING FOR LOW-INCOME GAS CUSTOMER  
10 ASSISTANCE, INCLUDING A SURCHARGE ON COMMERCIAL, INDUSTRIAL, AND  
11 RESIDENTIAL GAS CUSTOMERS IN THE STATE;

12 (5) DEVELOP MODELS FOR ASSISTANCE OF LOW-INCOME GAS  
13 CUSTOMERS; AND

14 (6) RECOMMEND OPTIONS FOR MEETING THE ENERGY NEEDS OF  
15 LOW-INCOME GAS CUSTOMERS, INCLUDING OPTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTING AND  
16 ADMINISTERING A NATURAL GAS UNIVERSAL SERVICE PROGRAM.

17 (D) THE TASK FORCE SHALL MEET AT LEAST FOUR TIMES A YEAR, AT THE  
18 TIMES AND PLACES THAT IT DETERMINES.

19 (E) THE TASK FORCE SHALL CONDUCT PUBLIC MEETINGS THROUGHOUT THE  
20 STATE IN THE COURSE OF ITS STUDY UNDER THIS SECTION.

21 (F) ON OR BEFORE DECEMBER 31, 2004, THE TASK FORCE SHALL REPORT TO  
22 THE COMMISSION, THE GOVERNOR, AND, SUBJECT TO § 2-1246 OF THE STATE  
23 GOVERNMENT ARTICLE, THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON THE STUDY AND  
24 RECOMMENDATIONS, INCLUDING ANY PROPOSED LEGISLATION NECESSARY OR  
25 ADVISABLE TO IMPLEMENT A NATURAL GAS UNIVERSAL SERVICE PROGRAM.

26 (G) THE COMMISSION SHALL PROVIDE STAFF SUPPORT TO THE TASK FORCE.

27 SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect  
28 July 1, 2003. It shall remain effective for a period of 2 years and, at the end of June  
29 30, 2005, with no further action required by the General Assembly, this Act shall be  
30 abrogated and of no further force and effect.